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ABSTRACT

This paper defines the "social turn" as a philosophy focused on interaction and social practice, and states that it was fostered in the New Literacy Studies movement as well as 13 other movements, which all argued the importance and definition of the social in their own ways. The paper then discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the social turn and argues against the new capitalism, asking the question, "Is the social turn politically progressive?" The paper proceeds to state that the New Literacy Studies are based on the idea that reading, writing and meaning are situated within specific social contexts and discourses. The paper concludes that, in order to engage in enactive and recognition work, communicators who engage in discourse analysis can view texts in terms of language recruitment methods. The paper provides three examples of such language analysis. (Contains 64 references.) (EF)

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The New Literacy Studies and the "Social Turn."

By James Gee

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1.The New Literacy Studies and the "Social Turn"

by James Gee

The New Literacy Studies (NLS) was one movement among many that took part in a larger "social turn" away from a focus on individuals and their "private" minds and towards interaction and social practice. The NLS (see Barton 1994; Gee 1996; and Street 1995 for programmatic statements; see Heath 1983 and Street 1984 for seminal "early" examples of the NLS) are based on the view that reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political, and economic) practices of which they are but a part. The NLS arose along side a heady mix of other movements, some of which were incorporated into the NLS. These movements argued their own case for the importance of the "social", each with their own take on what "social" was to mean. I list a "baker's dozen" of these movements below (NLS makes fourteen, and there are more). The order in which I list the areas below is entirely arbitrary:

1. Ethnomethodology and conversational analysis, and related work in interactional sociolinguistics (Goodwin & Heritage 1990; Heritage 1984; Schiffrin 1994: Ch. 4) has argued that social and institutional order is the product of the moment-by-moment intricacies of social and verbal interaction which produces and reproduces that order. "Knowing" is a matter of "knowing how to proceed" ("go on") in specific social interactions.

2. The ethnography of speaking (Gumperz 1982; Hymes 1974) has argued that language in use does not convey general and decontextualized meanings. Rather, participants in interaction use various lexical, structural, and prosodic "cues", in speech or writing, to infer just what context (or part of a context) is relevant and how this context gives words meanings specific to it. The form and meaning of these "contextualization cues" differ across different cultures, even among people from different social groups speaking the same language.

3. Sociohistorical psychology, following Vygotsky and later Bakhtin (Wertsch 1985, 1991), has argued that the human mind is "furnished" through a process of "internalizing" or "appropriating" images, patterns, and words from the social activities in which one has participated. Further, thinking is not "private", but almost always mediated by "cultural tools", that is, artifacts, symbols, tools, technologies, and forms of language that have been historically and culturally shaped to carry out certain functions and carry certain meanings (cultural tools have certain "affordances", though people can transform them through using them in new settings).

4. Closely related work on situated cognition (Lave 1996; Lave & Wenger 1991), also with an allegiance to Vygotsky, has argued that knowledge and intelligence reside not solely in heads, but, rather, are distributed across the social practices (including language practices) and the various tools, technologies, and semiotic

systems that a given "community of practice" uses in order to carry out its characteristic activities (e.g., part of a physicist's knowledge is embedded and distributed across her colleagues, social practices, tools, equipment, and texts). Knowing is a matter of being able to participate centrally in practice and learning is a matter of changing patterns of participation (with concomitant changes in identity).

5. Cultural models theory (D'Andrade & Strauss 1992; Holland & Quinn 1987), a social version of "schema theory", has argued that people make sense of their experiences by applying largely tacit "theories" or "cultural models" to them. Cultural models, which need not be complete or logically consistent, are simplified and prototypical arguments, images, "storylines", or metaphorical elaborations, shared within a culture or social group, that explain why and how things happen as they do and what they mean. These "theories" (which are embedded not just in heads, but in social practices, texts, and other media) guide action, inform judgments of self and others, and shape ways of talking and writing.

6. Cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; Ungerer & Schmid 1996) argues that all human languages are organized in terms of intricate, complex, intersecting, and overlapping systems of metaphors (and related figurative devices). These metaphors shape, in different ways in different cultures, how we interpret our experience and how we think about ourselves and the material, social, and cultural world. For example, in English we often think and talk about argument in ways shaped by how we talk about warfare ("I defended my argument and destroyed his case at the same time") or talk about minds as if they were enclosed spaces ("He just couldn't get it into his head").

7. The new science and technology studies (Latour 1987, 1991) has argued that scientific knowledge is rooted in scientists' day-to-day social practices and distributed across (and stored within) those practices and the characteristic spaces, tools, texts, symbols, and technologies that scientists' use. Scientists' day-to-day practices are far more historically, technologically, socially, and culturally conditioned than appears from the "write up" of their results in books and journals. Scientists' knowledge is a matter of "coordinating" and "getting coordinated by" (in mind and body) colleagues, objects, nature, texts, technologies, symbols, language, and social and instrumental practices.

8. Modern composition theory (Bazerman 1989; Myers 1992; Swales 1990) has stressed the ways in which knowledge and meaning is situated within the characteristic talking, writing, acting, and interacting "genres" (patterns) of disciplines and other specialized domains. These (historically changing) genres create both the conditions for and the limits to what can be said and done in the discipline at a given time and place.

9. Work on connectionism (Clark 1993; Gee 1992) in cognitive science has argued that humans do not primarily think and act on the basis of mental representations that are general rules or logical propositions. Rather, thinking and acting are a matter of using, and adapting to current circumstances, stored patterns or images of our past experiences. These patterns or images are shaped (edited) by the social, cultural, and personal contexts of those experiences.

10. The broad interdisciplinary field of narrative studies (Bruner 1986; Ricoeur 1984), which views narrative as the primary form of human understanding, has argued that people make sense of their experiences of other people and the world by emplotting them in terms of socially and culturally specific stories, stories which are supported by the social practices, rituals, texts, and other media representations of specific social groups and cultures. Narratives can, at times, e.g., in science, be transformed into and elaborated in other non-narrative genres.

11. Work on evolutionary approaches to mind and behavior (Clark 1997; Dawkins 1982; Kauffman 1993) argues that human intelligence is not a general and purely mental thing. Rather, our minds and bodies are the specific products of a long evolutionary process of mutual adaptation and shaping between ourselves

and our material, social, and cultural environments. Human intelligence resides in the "fit" between these, and the proper unit of analysis is, therefore, "persons and their material, social, cultural environments interacting through historical and social and interactional time".

12. Modern sociology (Beck, Giddens, & Lash 1994; Giddens 1984, 1987) has stressed the ways in which human thinking, acting, and interaction are simultaneously structured by institutional forces and, in turn, give a specific order (structure, shape) to institutions such that it is impossible to say which comes first, institutions or the human social practices that continually enact and reproduce (and transform) them. Modern sociology has also stressed, as well, the ways in which this reciprocal exchange between human interaction and human institutions is being transformed by global economic and demographic changes such that the nature of time, space, human relationships, and communities are being radically transformed.

13. Finally, a good deal of so-called "post-structuralist" and "postmodernist" work (e.g., Bakhtin 1984; Bourdieu 1979/1984; Fairclough 1992; Foucault 1973, 1977), much of it earlier than the movements we have just discussed, has centered around the notion of "discourses". "Discourses" are characteristic (socially and culturally formed, but historically changing) ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and toward people and things (ways which are circulated and sustained within various texts, artifacts, images, social practices, and institutions, as well as in moment-to-moment social interactions) such that certain perspectives and states of affairs come to be taken as "normal" or "natural" and others come to be taken as "deviant" or "marginal" (e.g., what counts as a "normal" prisoner, hospital patient, or student, or a "normal" prison, hospital, or school, at a given time and place).

Obviously, these movements, stemming from different disciplines, overlap at many points, and they have influenced each other in complex ways. While there are genuine disagreements among them, they are (including in work in the NLS) beginning to converge in various respects (e.g., John-Steiner, Panofsky, & Smith 1994). It is not uncommon, in fact, to see citations to all or most of these movements in current work on sociocultural approaches to literacy and related aspects of education.

All these movements were, or have been used as, reactions against the behaviorism of the early part of this century and the "cognitive revolution" of the 60's and 70's that replaced behaviorism, both of which privileged the individual mind. Cognitivism saw "higher order thinking" and "intelligence" as primarily the manipulation of "information" ("facts") using general ("logical") rules and principles. Fact and "logic", not affect, society, and culture, were emphasized. For cognitivism, the digital computer stood as the great metaphor for what thought was: "information processing" (and computers process information based on its form/structure, not its meaning).

2. Is the "Social Turn" Politically Progressive?

Many of us involved in the "social turn" assumed that the movements that made it up were somehow inherently politically "progressive". That is, we assumed that focusing on the social would unmask the workings of hierarchy, power, and social injustice, as well as create more humane, because less elitist and

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individualistic, institutions (e.g., schools) and communities. Many of us saw ourselves, too, as working in opposition to the fetishist profit motives of capitalism and in favor of seeing the significance of humans and their institutions in a much broader historical, social, cultural, and political context than markets, profit, and consumption.

I admit that, in the 80's, when I began my own "social turn" (away from generative linguistics), I saw the social turn in entirely politically progressive terms, though I was aware (and regretted) that some of its movements would not talk openly about politics (in part, I assumed, because it was thought that such talk would lessen the work's standing as "science"). Imagine my surprise, then, to see how readily the "social turn" was taken up by capitalism itself and that a so-called "new capitalism" viewed many of the above "social turn" movements in a quite positive light--in fact, financially supported some of them (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear 1996).

The old capitalism was interested in the most efficient organization of individuals as individuals. Knowledge and skills were broken into bits and pieces. Each individual, on a assembly line, for instance, did his or her bit or piece of the work process as an interchangeable cog in the machine, without knowing or needing to know the "big picture". Only the elite ("managers" and "bosses") were supposed to be able to put the bits and pieces of the work process back together, otherwise their status and power (and claims to "higher intelligence") might have been undermined by the perspectives and interests of the "front line" workers.

In the old capitalism, it was dangerous to treat individuals as social beings with collective interests or to allow them to be so, because that might have further encouraged unionization and collective organization. Cultures were dangerous, too, because their specific ways and mores could stand in the way of the standard procedures and norms needed for large, secular, modern, rational, universal (that is, culturally transcendent) businesses. In the old capitalism, work was meant to have as little social, cultural, historical, and political context as possible, much like knowledge and meaning in traditional psychology.

The new capitalism is the product of massive global and technological changes that have made competition global and hyper-intense. Under these conditions, businesses need to out-compete their competition by producing the highest quality product or service as quickly as possible at the lowest price. This means, in turn, no "fat", no excess, no person, practice, or thing that does not directly "add value" to the final service or product (Boyett & Conn 1992; Dobyns & Crawford-Mason 1991).

As more companies compete on this basis, across the globe, something else happens: products and services are less and less distinguishable based on cost or quality (you can get the best from overseas in a day by express mail), and more and more distinguishable by the "knowledge work" that has gone into designing, producing, and marketing them "on time" and "on demand" for just the right "niche" in the market (Davidow & Malone 1992; Ducker 1993; Frank & Cook 1995; Imparato & Harai 1994).

The highest and most important form of knowledge and skill in the new capitalism is what I will call sociotechnical designing, that is: designing products and services so that they create or "speak to" specific consumer identities and values (niches); designing better ways to organize the production and delivery of products and services; designing ways to shape consumer identities and values through advertising and marketing; and designing ways to transform products and markets based on consumer identities and values (Burrus 1993; Hamel & Prahalad 1994; Hammer & Champy 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Peters 1994a, b; Smith 1995). All this design work is heavily social and contextual and semiotic (that is, it often involves manipulating symbols of identity).

In turn, the highest and most important form of sociotechnical designing involves designing new workplaces and new workers. New workplaces are designed to leverage knowledge from worker's

day-to-day practices. In the new capitalism, thanks to changing technology and the pace of innovation, the knowledge that "front line" workers gain in ongoing practice as they flexibly adapt to new circumstances is more valuable than explicit knowledge based on theories and past practices, both of which go out of date too quickly.

Workers in the new capitalism are meant to continuously gain and apply new knowledge by understanding the whole work process in which they are involved, not just bits and pieces, and they are meant to proactively and continually transform and improve that work process through collaboration with others and with technology. With fewer workers, working longer and with less supervision, and amidst fast-paced change that often outstrips individual knowledge, new capitalist workers must work in teams (where workers supervise each other) that collaboratively and interactively design and redesign their work process with a full knowledge of and overlap with each other's functions, so that they can take over from each other when someone is missing (Lipnack & Stamps 1993; Peters 1994a; Senge 1991; Wiggenhorn 1990).

There are several essential paradoxes built into the new capitalism. New capitalist workers are supposed to know the whole work process with which they are involved. They are supposed to fully leverage their practical knowledge for the company. They are supposed to actively transform, improve, and adapt their work practices to fast paced changes in markets and technologies. What, then, is to prevent them from: A) using their new found knowledge and status to critique the company, or, indeed, the new capitalism itself? and/or B) walk off with their newly important knowledge (now that they, indeed, have something of their own to sell) and sell it to the highest bidder? Furthermore, C) how is knowledge that is continually gained in practice, often tacit, and transformed quickly, going to get stored and passed on for the company's benefit (it won't do to write manuals; they require explicit knowledge and, further, can go out of date before the ink is dry)?

These three paradoxes (A-C) are "solved", in the new capitalism, by the sociotechnical device of a "community of practice" (Peters 1994a: pp. 174ff; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Schrage 1990; Smith 1995). Workers, on a rather egalitarian basis, engage in a "whole integrated process" involving many functions (and roles) which they distribute among themselves and across their tools and technologies, but in overlapping and collaborative ways so that the practice can continue if the community is "lesioned" by a person or tool gone missing. Further, since knowledge is distributed across multiple people, specific social practices, and various tools, technologies, and procedures--and is not stored in any one head--the problem of people "walking" with their knowledge is, more or less, solved. The knowledge is in the community of practice which "belongs" to the company, not in the individual.

Newcomers ("apprentices") are "trained" by being scaffolded in "joint practice" with those already adept at the practice (a very Vygotskian process), not (just) through overt instruction which cannot carry the full load of "tacit knowledge in practice" and goes out of date. Everyone in the community of practice gains knowledge through immersion in the collaborative practice, knowledge that they may not be able to explicate in words, but which they can pass on through the socialization of new members.

Within a community of practice all members pick up a variety of tacit and taken-for-granted values, norms, cultural models, and narratives as part of their socialization into the practice and their ongoing immersion in the practice. Tacitly accepting these values, norms, cultural models, and narratives (in mind, action, and embodied practice), and sharing them with others, is just what it means to be a member of the community of practice. This, by and large, solves the problem of critique.

The community of practice is continually transformed by being "stressed" (a technical term in connectionism that applies to learning). They are "stressed" through the acquisition of new ideas, new members, new technologies, and new social activities designed by sociotechnical engineers from either inside or outside the community of practice itself (often drawing on members' "insider knowledge"). Such

changes are adaptations to ongoing changes in technology or markets. When the company or the market changes sufficiently, the community of practice is disbanded and its members redistributed to other projects, other companies, or unemployment.

In this framework, a framework of "communities of practice" based around "projects", individuals are seen as specific trajectories through all the projects and communities of practice of which they have been a part. An individual is seen, as well, as a portfolio of all the knowledge and skills achieved in this trajectory through "project and practice space", knowledge and skills which the individual can leverage, rearrange, and transform for new projects and new communities of practice. I should point out that this is as true of "front line" workers as it is of more elite "symbol analysts" (Reich 1992).

Furthermore, in the new capitalism there is a continual emphasis on the flexible transformation (even creative "destruction" or "deconstruction") of people, practices, markets, and institutions. There is an emphasis, as well, on crossing and destroying borders (divisions, departments) between people, practices, and institutions, because borders mitigate the integration of "whole processes" and the flexible, but overlapping and collaborative distribution of knowledge and work (Hammer & Champy 1993; Lipnack & Stamps 1993). This flexible transformation of identities, practices, and institutions, and its concomitant border-crossing, takes on a distinctly postmodern flavor in the new capitalism (Peters 1992). There is no use for old "universal" fixed certainties (Bauman 1992). Differences of all sorts, including cultural differences (as long as the cultures have money and can consume) are celebrated since they simply allow communities of practice to be infused with diverse knowledge and skills (any of which might eventually become a novel source of change and value), as well as allowing for the creation of more market niches with their distinctive consumer identities.

I hope it is readily apparent that a great many of the themes in the "social turn" movements I listed above are fully recruited in this rehearsal of the new capitalism and its paradoxes. The fact is that these social turn movements can easily be transformed into a theory and praxis for the new capitalism, fully subordinated to the goal of profit, though in the new capitalism it is profit with a "human face" (i.e., empowered "knowledge workers" working collaboratively to add "value").

It should not have been surprising to me that these "social turn" movements readily lent themselves to the goals of the new capitalism. It is one of the tenants of the NLS that any piece of language, any tool, technology, or social practice can take on quite different meanings (and values) in different contexts, and that no piece of language, no tool, technology, or social practice has a meaning (or value) outside of all contexts.

Nonetheless, it is striking that the "social turn" and the new capitalism's interest in sociotechnical designing of social practices arose at the same historical juncture (and, to take one example out of an entire process, the digital computer was debunked as a theory of mind by the "social turn" movements just as new connectionist/networking computers offered the new capitalism an important new technology for integrating work processes and leveraging knowledge built up out of practice/experience). And, too, it has not hurt the new capitalism that the "social turn" theories that undergird its practices are seen, in large part, as politically progressive (ironically, the Fordist theories that had undergird the old capitalism were themselves originally seen as politically progressive, though they eventually came to be viewed as reactionary).

Before moving to the next section, let me anticipate a question the reader may be asking: What's so wrong with the "new capitalism"? It sounds better than the old. What's wrong is this: The new capitalism, as Reich (1992) and Drucker (1993) and others have argued, leads to good, if risky, rewards for those who have sophisticated sociotechnical knowledge to sell (the people that Reich calls "symbol analysts"). It leads to fairly meager financial rewards (though, perhaps, more control and meaning at work) for those who can

work in sociotechnically designed environments by the canons of the new capitalist work teams--people Gee, Hull, & Lankshear 1996 call "enchanted workers" (see Gee, Hull, & Lankshear: Chs. 4 & 5 for a detailed study of enchanted workers at work). However, a developed economy needs--and, in a "lean and mean" environment" can pay for--only so many symbol analysts and enchanted workers (Reich says about two-fifths of the population). Large numbers of less fortunate souls must be exploited (beyond even the exploitation of the enchanted workers) in order to make a company, region, or country "hyper-competitive" in our global economy.

Thus, for large numbers of people in the developed world, and many more in the "less developed" world, the new capitalism is leading to, at best, very poor pay and work conditions in "service work", "temporary work", "brute work", the remaining backwater jobs of the old capitalist businesses, and multiple jobs that do not together add up to a living wage. These are the hoards who have no "knowledge" that "adds value" by new capitalist standards, hoards that, in fact, must work (if they can find work at all) at the lowest possible price in the highly competitive and global environment of the new capitalism, where businesses search the world for the cheapest labor.

At the same time, the new capitalism has created cultural and class-based affiliations among the wealthy across the globe while simultaneously undercutting feelings of "co-citizenship" across class lines within local, regional, and national communities. Reich has argued that it is harder and harder to know what would constitute an argument that "symbol analysts" (who affiliate, both in real time and cyberspace, with other symbol analysts across the country and the world) bear any social responsibility toward their fellow less-advantaged citizens. More and more, such elites feel little affiliation and little "co-citzenship" with such people. Drucker, himself a guru of the new capitalism, has argued, in turn, that social class in the future will be defined around "knowledge", with a massive number of "service workers" at the bottom of the new class system (and the unemployed out of it altogether). How such service workers are treated (disciplined?), he argues, will determine a large part of the social dynamics of society.

The new capitalism, in its demands on workers for "total commitment" to the goals/vision of the business, constructs human worth and identity around "knowledge" defined in terms of "value added". It breaks down the barrier between private and public life, demanding one's mind, body, and soul for the business. For example, consider Boyett & Conn, 1991, talking about "Workplace 2000": "A 'cult of performance excellence' will engulf most businesses. Americans will be expected to buy in, join in, become a part of the company values and culture, or be forced out" (p. 3) or: "What these 'work hard, play hard' companies want is nothing less than total responsibility and over-the-edge loyalty .... Employees are constantly on view and the line between work and play, the line between public and private becomes fuzzy" (p. 40).

However socially knowledge may be defined in the new capitalism, defining human worth in terms of "value added" to a business process is wrong for all the same sorts of reasons that defining human worth in terms of simple capital and profits was wrong in the old capitalism. Even business gurus like Charles Handy know this: Handy (1994) has argued that it is imperative that we imagine notions of human worth, status, and community outside of financial rewards and markets even as he acknowledges the tendency of the new capitalism to co-opt all spheres of private and public life in the name of commitment to economic productivity.

3. Back to the New Literacy Studies

The NLS is based around the idea that reading, writing, and meaning are always situated within specific

social practices within specific discourses (Discourses). As we have just seen, the new capitalism has surely "bought" the idea that reading, writing, knowledge, work, meaning, and "value" are inextricably embedded in the local, social, and material processes of worksites, work practices, and work groups. This is where the most valuable knowledge is embedded and distributed, and where sociotechnical discipline must be applied if "value" is to be extracted and leveraged for the company's good.

Almost all the social turn movements I surveyed above came, at some point in their trajectories, to see that, in saying that meaning is situated in context, they were often appealing to a notion of "context" that was too static. The fact is that words give meaning to contexts just as surely as contexts give meaning to words. Words and context are two mirrors facing each other, infinitely and simultaneously reflecting each other.

If they had not from the outset, sooner or later all the social turn movements came to argue that meaning and context are mutually constitutive of each other. A word or deed takes its meaning from a context which it, in turn, helps to create, given that it has that meaning. For example, certain sorts of utterances take on the meaning of "sweet nothings" in the context of a romantic relationship, but the context of a romantic relationship is created (we know we are in such a context) by just such things as utterances like these having just such meanings. Or another example: the context of traditional formal schooling gives certain words and actions the meaning of "test", but such words and actions with such a meaning are what, in turn, make formal schooling formal schooling.

What is often left out in discussions of the mutually constitutive nature of words and contexts is the person as agent who utters (writes) the words with (conscious and unconscious) personal, social, cultural, and political goals and purposes. Of course, in social turn theories, the person's deeds and body are part of the situation or context, but the person as an actor engaged in an effort to achieve purposes and goals is left out as an embarrassing residue of our pre-social days. Consider, for example, how many postmodernists talk about people ("subjects") not so much as authoring their words, but of their words authoring ("subject-ing") them (see, e.g., Foucault 1972: pp. 95-96). The person disappears other than as historical and discursive construct.

Reflecting on the new capitalism over the last few years has made me want to move the idea of work (in the sense of human effort) to the center of the New Literacy studies. In particular, as a linguist, I am interested in a particular type of work to which I think language is particularly important, though never by itself, but always in tandem with deeds, interactions, other sorts of symbols, and ways of thinking and valuing. Let me, then, say something about the sort of human work I have in mind.

Situations (contexts) do not just exist. Situations are rarely static or uniform, they are actively created, sustained, negotiated, resisted, and transformed moment by moment through ongoing work. It is the nature of this work that should, I argue, become crucial to the New Literacy Studies. This type of work I will call enactive and recognition work. Language is designed precisely to help us do just such work.

What do I mean by enactive work and recognition work? Think about the matter this way: Out in the world exist materials out of which we continually make and remake our social worlds. The social arises when we humans relate (organize, coordinate) these materials together in a way that is recognizable to others. We attempt to get other people to recognize people and things as having certain meanings and values within certain configurations or relationships. Our attempts are what I mean by "enactive work" and others' active efforts to accept or reject our attempts--to see or fail to see things "our way"-- are what I mean by "recognition work".

We attempt, through our words and deeds, to get others to recognize people, things, artifacts, symbols, tools, technologies, actions, interactions, times, places, and ways of speaking, listening, writing, reading, feeling, believing, thinking, and valuing as meaningful and valuable in certain ways. We attempt to make

each of these meaningful and valuable each in themselves ("this is scientist", "this is a scientific instrument", "this is objective information", etc..) and as a configuration of elements all related to each other in a specific and meaningful way ("this is a scientist at work with her lab assistants engaged in an experiment that will yield objective truth").

Of course, the individual elements in a configuration are meaningful and valuable only as they are related within that configuration. Our real enactive work is in creating and sustaining the configuration. This configuration here is a "science experiment in a lab", this one "a street gang looking for trouble", this one "elementary school students demonstrating knowledge", this one "a quality circle redesigning work", and so and on and so forth through a never ending and ever changing list. Configurations change moment by moment unless energy is continually put into them to sustain them (and, of course, energy is often put into them to disrupt or transform them).

We can engage in enactive work from outside a configuration, e.g., a sociologist of science trying to get colleagues to view work in science labs as meaningful and valuable in ways quite different from how traditional historians of science have viewed such matters or how scientists view them when they are at work doing science or writing science. But we spend our lives always and also engaging in enactive work from inside the configurations we work to get recognized in certain ways. We coordinate ourselves (in mind, body, and soul) with the other elements in configurations (things, places, times, tools, symbols, other people, ways of acting, interacting, valuing, thinking, etc.) and, in turn, we get coordinated by them (Knorr Cetina 1992).

Getting "in sync" with these other elements means not just controlling (coordinating) them, but adapting to (getting coordinating by) them. And this applies not just to people. It applies to things and symbols, as well: you can't just do anything you want with a hammer, for instance, and the hammer has certain affordances that make it easier to use in some ways than others. It is, for example, easier to get others to recognize you as engaged in adept carpentry if you use the hammer in some ways, rather than others. Things and symbols are, in this sense, actors too. They work on us as we work on them (this is part of the point of Latour's 1987, 1991 actor-network theory and part of the point of Wertsch's 1985, 1991 Vygotskianly-inspired ideas about the ways in which tools mediate human action and thinking).

The same set of people, words, deeds, and things at the same time and place can be seen as different configurations (patterns)--what someone sees as a "professor advising graduate student", someone else can see as "male authority harassing female subordinate". And a participant can attempt to change the meaning and value of a configuration in the midst of it. Think, for instance, of the many different ways we can attempt to get age and gender recognized within configurations, each in their own right and in relation to each other. Age and gender mean different things as and when we see them as part and parcel of different configurations of persons, deeds, words, settings, and things. And we can fight over--from without or within--what they are to mean within an emerging configuration of people, words, deeds, and things that awaits a name ("professor advising young graduate student", "older male abusing his authority in regard to a younger, less powerful female").

We can say as well that any attempt to get the elements of a configuration and the configuration itself recognized in a certain way is an attempt to pro-ject these elements and this configuration into the world. Such work is, in this sense, always also a project, and a political one at that, since such configurations are the very stuff of our social relations, relations in which power and desire are always and everywhere at stake. Thus, one way we can analyze people, words, and deeds is to ask what they seek to pro-ject into the world, what political projects they implicate.

To summarize my point then: It takes work to get a set of people, deeds, words, settings, and things recognized as a particular configuration with each of its members (e.g., age, gender, bullying tone of voice)

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recognized in a certain way. People inside and outside these configurations work to get specific configurations recognized (by themselves and others) as composed of just these actors, events, activities, practices, and Discourses, and not those--as recognized in this way and not that. It takes work to sustain such recognitions and to support or resist the work of others to unsettle such a recognition and transform it in various ways (think of all the efforts of the New Literacy Studies themselves to get "local literacies" recognized as "literacy"). How the elements of these configurations are to be labeled, viewed or characterized, how configurations are to be "carved up" into actors, events, activities, practices, and Discourses, is always "up for grabs". Actors, events, activities, practices, and Discourses do not exist in the world except through active work, work that is very often unstable and contested.

The new capitalism is engaged in quite overt enactive and recognition work using many of the same conceptual tools and theories used in some of the social turn movements. The important site of struggle with the new capitalism would be a battle over enactment and recognition work at the very sites where the new capitalism operates (though, for the most part, our battles have been in the university). It is ironic to meditate, in this regard, on the extremely low status of work on adult and workplace language and literacy in the U.S., and its absence from a good deal of work in the NLS.

4. Analyzing Language

We who engage in discourse analysis can view texts in terms of the ways in which language is recruited to engage in enactive and recognition work. Let me give a brief example of what I mean. Consider the two texts printed below. One is from an interview with a university professor in a post-industrial East coast city in the United States, a city with typical urban poverty, gang, and racial problems. The other text is from an interview with a school teacher in the same city. In this city, as in many other places in the U.S., school teachers are treated as if they have lower status and less prestigious knowledge than university professors, and there is tension between the two groups. It is fair to say that, in a sense, teachers are a dominated group vis-a-vis university academics (a dominance mediated by faculty in Education departments and programs). These two women are talking about whether there are racial problems in their city and how they think about them. I cite only a small bit of each interview. I will attempt below to contextualize these bits in terms of the larger interviews from which they were taken:

A. UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGIST (FEMALE)

Interviewer: . . . How, do you see racism happening, in society, let's put it that way.

1. Um, well, I could answer on, on a variety of different levels. [I: uh huh]

2a. Um, at the most macro level, um, I think that there's um, um,

3. I don't want to say this in a way that sounds like a conspiracy, [I: mm hm]

2b. But I think um, that um, basically that the lives of people of color are are, are irrelevant to the society anymore. [I: mm hm]

4. Um, they're not needed for the economy because we have the third world to run away into for cheap labor, [I: uh huh]

B. MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER (FEMALE)

Interviewer: ... would you ever tie that into like present power relations or just individual experiences of racism in their lives or something like that.

...

1. uh I talk about housing,

2. We talk about the [????] we talk about a lot of the low income things,

3. I said "Hey wait a minute,"

4. I said, "Do you think the city's gonna take care of an area that you don't take care of yourself?" [I: uh huh]

5. I said, "How [many of] you [have] been up [NAME] Street?"

6. They raise their hands,

7. I say "How about [NAME] Ave.,"

8. That's where those gigantic houses are,

...

9. I said, "How many pieces of furniture are sitting in the front yard?" [I: mm hm] "Well, none."

10. I said "How much trash is lying around?" None."

11. I said, "How many houses are spray painted?

12. How many of them have kicked in, you know have broken down cars

It would be easy to apply several of our "social turn" movements to these texts. For example, the professor applies a widespread academic cultural model in terms of which actual behavior ("the appearances") follow from larger, deeper, more general, underlying, and hidden causes. The teacher applies a widespread cultural model in terms of which people's problems flow from their own behaviors as individuals, and it is through "correct" behavior and "proper" appearances that one achieves "success". It is also typical, at least of the city in which these women live, that the university academic codes questions about "racism" as about "people of color" (and this often means, for academics, a focus on African-Americans) and the teacher codes them as about class (many of the people she is referring to are white), though she never names class directly.

However, we can also look at these texts as attempts--though they are, of course, just small bits of a much larger picture--to get the elements of certain configurations of people, poverty, crime, fear, and segregated neighborhoods, which both women experience, however differently, as a lived reality in their city, recognized in certain ways, with ultimate implications for projects they would like to see enacted.

Before continuing, however, it is important to point out that, in the city in which these women live, the biggest, newest, and most salient ethnic group is composed of Hispanics. There are many fewer blacks (both African Americans and Caribbean immigrants, who do not see themselves as necessarily the same group, despite the fact that university academics tend to). In interviews we have done with school children, white and Hispanic, including students of the teacher above, they (both the white and Hispanic children) regularly use Hispanic children as their symbol of gangs, non-school affiliation, and social problems.

Throughout her interview--and this is clearly a co-construction with the interviewer--the professor almost always wants (and is sustained by the interviewer in this effort) to recognize actors, events, activities, practices, and Discourses in terms of economic and nation-state level politics. She wants to recognize "racial problems" as transcending her city and as a global affair, despite the fact that she could well point to many specific instances in her city (where racial problems very much have their own "spin").

Though the teacher is interviewed by the same interviewer, the interviewer and teacher co-construct a very different, much more local sort of recognition. In fact, in much other work in this city, and with teachers in other places, I have found that researchers and teachers alike always assume that teachers have only a "local voice" on such issues. Rarely are teachers invited into--or do they have access to--a "national voice". Even when invited to speak at national conferences, teachers usually speak as representatives of their local areas and their own experiences, while researchers speak as transcending locality and their own experiences.

In addition to her local focus, which is a co-construction with the interviewer, the teacher wants more specifically to recognize individual actors who, in fact, do not really belong to a "class" or "race", but whose individual behaviors ensure that they are poor and looked down upon by others, others who have no real obligation to help them, since they need to help themselves. I have found that many teachers in the city in which this teacher lives fiercely resist putting people, especially children, into "groups", and want to see them as individual actors who, if they are children, need nurturing, and if they are adults, need to take responsibility for themselves. Such teachers, in fact, actively work to "undo" the recognition and enactment work of university academics in regard to social and cultural "categories" of people, especially children.

The university professor would, in all likelihood, advocate "state level" policy changes, as well as "public education", as projects in regard to racism. The teacher would advocate individuals "cleaning up their act" and children not following the lead of their parents (if they are "unpresentable"), but, rather, the lead of the teacher herself when she tells her students how to act and appear for "success" in the mainstream world (as in the text above, and, e.g., when she tells her students how to talk and dress for an interview).

Notice, too, that both of these examples of enactment-recognition work leave the people who suffer the most racism and poverty in this city, namely, Hispanics, out of the picture. In one case, "people of color" suffer the effects of global causes, in the other case, raceless and classless "poor" people suffer the effects of their own behavior. At the same time, as I pointed out above, the children in the schools in this city recognize Hispanics specifically and advocate various projects in regard to them.

There is a connection between the two pieces of enactment-recognition work we have been discussing, as, indeed, there is a connection between the Discourses of academics and of teachers. On the basis of such enactment and recognition work, little effective action could actually be taken in regard to the problems of race and class in this city. In one case, the problems lay elsewhere, at a very deep and global level. In the other case, the problems are entirely on the surface of, and in the appearances of, houses and behavior, and these are the responsibility of the people whose appearances they are.

We can note, too, that both these pieces of enactment-recognition work leave out community-level enactments and recognitions. This may well be because in respect to the university professor's cosmopolitan identity, the community and sub-communities of her city are of little practical significance. She is focused on her own (white and privileged) neighborhood and on the national and international academic scene. The communities in-between are, in concrete and practical terms, not very visible.

On the other hand, teachers in this city tend to be nostalgic for a sense of community built up around the white immigrant experience of the last century and the beginnings of this one, an experience of which they are the (proud) products and which they see being visibly transformed (in their view, for the worse) by largely Hispanic immigrants. Nonetheless, given their individualistic and nurturing attitudes towards their students, they resist, when talking as teachers (not necessarily when talking as "citizens of the city"), naming their students' group affiliations.

5. The Lancaster School

In the end, I would argue that a focus on actors, events, activities, social practices, and Discourses as the "achievements" of recognition and enactment work, with an overt focus on that work (including the researcher's), can help us take back our social theories from the new capitalism, while requiring us to own up to our own projects and engage with other people's--especially "non-academic" people's--projects at a variety of levels.

I think that much of what I have said is at the heart of what the Lancaster group is up to, a group who might usefully be called "the Lancaster school", since the group's work has become an internationally distinctive and distinguished approach within the New Literacy Studies. For instance, Mary Hamilton's (this volume) question about how central literacy has to be to an event for it to be called a "literacy event" raises quite directly the issue of how "written-language bits" are recruited into and integrated with "other stuff" in meaningful configurations of words, deeds, objects, symbols, and ways of thinking, being, and doing. Hamilton's question raises as well the issue of how people, both from within and without (e.g., we researchers), negotiate and contest over how to name and enact such configurations.

There is no answer to Hamilton's question. It is, in reality, a call for studying the ways in which people engage in enactive and recognition work, and what projects underlie and flow from such work. It is a call, too, for researchers to see their theories of such things as "literacy events" as themselves instances of enactive and recognition work linked, tacitly or overtly, to their own projects.

The other papers in this volume by the Lancaster group put on display a myriad of elements (sheep, time, computers, televisions, science, prison cells, homework projects) entering and exiting configurations amidst the enactive and recognition work of diverse people with sometimes conflicting and sometimes linked interests, values, and goals. In every case, there is a special focus on how the literacy bits work in relation to everything else. "Literacy bits" are used almost like a radioactive isotope that allows bits and pieces of the whole configuration to be lit up, the better to find our way into the interlocking links among diverse elements that constitutes the configuration. We can then study the human work it takes to get and keep these links forged, to destroy them, or to transform them. In every case, too, there is a focus on what is pro-jected out in the world and the effects this project has on people lives and the implications it holds for issues of social justice.

The Lancaster school focuses on "local literacies". "Local" takes on, in their work, for me, a rather special meaning: the site at which people--in tandem with words, deeds, objects, tools, symbols, settings, times, and ways of being, doing, thinking, and valuing--work out their projects, as well as work on and rework the projects that flow at and to them from close and far.

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